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“MUM’S” BOY

The following story—with some necessary omissions due to lack of space in *THE REVIEW*—was written and printed privately by Mr. Joseph S. Auerbach in book-form for the Boy and for those who knew him well. Because the story belongs to the universally appealing literature of boyhood, and is therefore worthy of a public audience, the Editor has persuaded Mr. Auerbach to consent to its publication in the pages of *THE REVIEW* at this Christmas season. It can best be appreciated after a reading of the Preface.—EDITOR.

FROM “MUM” TO HIS DEAREST BOY

As you see, I have had this story bound up within the covers of a little book so that you may keep it always, and thus know of my great love for you and my sure faith in you.

You see, too, from the added photograph which “Baba” has made of us, how you are sitting on my knee, with the pasteboard toys, we two have made, by your side; and how you are looking as if understandingly at the manuscript of the story, which some day, when just a bit more of a boy, you must really read over to me with many a laugh, as I tell you still other stories about yourself. If, however, I am not able then to be with you because I have been summoned to go upon a Long Journey, you must nevertheless read it, if not with laughter, at least with a smile; for I would never consent in any way to be the cause of needless tears or sorrow to you.

I have, of course, a great longing to keep company with you in coming years; but unfortunately or fortunately—we never can be quite certain which it is—some of the fondest wishes we mortals make are denied to us. Yet, though I am not sure of thus being with you, I am sure of these things: If long life is your portion—and God grant it may be—the fine boy will grow into the finer man; the world will be the better and the wiser because you have been in it, while those about you will have more joyous lives; and many a poor fellow, that has stumbled and is in sore need, will know the reassuring grip of your kindly hand, as you lift him to his feet.

Only a little child to you he seems; and yet
I have to bounteous Heaven no greater debt
Than gift of his dear soul; imaged in that rare face
Whereto an angel’s charm could not add other grace.

And my fond love for him would last, were I to live,
While streams to seas their ministering waters give;
The moon be mistress of the ebb and flood of tide
And sun for dull earth the quickening light and guide.

Were I to live, my love for him would ever grow
Till kindly deed to noble thought no tribute owe,
Till ardent faith should have no shrine, no hope, no sky,
And heroes lose their life who for their country die.

YES, it was concerning this boy—who was with us just before dinner, and who has grown so of late in brain and body—that I wrote some time since, when I had persuaded myself and was seeking to persuade others, that those whose dwelling-place is the spirit-world can, if we so wish, be of our earthly company:

Perhaps you will bear with me for adding an experience of my own.

Once a child came to our household; but ill fitted for the rough, dusty highway of life, he made but a short journey along it. His days were only sufficient to enable him to know a few things and to lisp a few words. One of the things about him which he recognized and loved—perhaps because it was of such close kinship with himself—was the butterfly, and one of the words he first learned to utter was "Butterf'y." I see him now as I have seen him all these years—as clearly as one can see through tears—with tiny foot uplifted, to descend in little emphatic stamp as he said his one big word. There came a day when, summoned to a distant city on a professional errand, the last I saw of him was as he repeated for me, with that voice which was all gentle music, his Butterf'y. Alas, before my return, the spirit of that child, which had come out of the unknown to our household as a brief resting-spot, had fluttered back to the place whence it had come.

Years went by and now the counterpart of this precious memory, another little boy of a later generation, only just a bit sturdier, has come into my life. This newcomer is my good comrade. Often he takes me by the hand—much more than I can be said to take him by his hand—and we wander off in the fields together, to see the flowers and birds, and talk over a good many things which are more worth while than some of us at times realize. It is true I do most of the talking, for he does not yet talk in language which we are apt to think the only means of communicating ideas. Yet he expresses his assent and dissent in a way clearly understood by himself and quite intelligible to me. Then, if his step suggests weariness, he climbs to my shoulder and we leave the bright skies and continue our comradeship indoors. Always at some part of the play, in his own invented way, outstretched on half-bent knees he hides his face from me away down among some banked-up pillows. Thereupon I am to call the roll of the places where he is not to be found, and he is to answer "No" with that musical, rising inflection all his own. Finally I must guess where he really is. And when—after his mouse-like silence, which is confession—I find him laughing as only he can laugh, underneath a shock of golden, sun-lit curls, I am quite sure then, as I often am, that something of that other child has passed into the soul and the face of this gentle, manly, beautiful little boy.

I suppose it is true that in the interval he has almost come out of babyhood into boyhood, though doubtless I have not quite realized this as have others. For the day-by-day change has been well-nigh imperceptible to me, except when those curls of his were ruth-

lessly cut away, while to you there was the baby and there is now in part the boy—even though he is but slightly beyond his fourth year. Heaven be praised, however, that he has not now, and my prayer is that he will never have, a precocious hair in his wise little head.

Sometimes it occurs to me that he may have been too much with those of mature age and not enough, as a rule, with children. Yet on reflection I scarcely believe this, seeing how eager he has been for a companionship which, while not wanting in wholesome frolic, has made many a journey into Fairyland and Wonderland and found treasures there for the possession of all of us. So it has come about that this romping, thoughtful boy is by turns my play-fellow and dreamer and philosopher, though I will not admit having been the pedagogue with him. On the contrary, he has taught me that which concerns not only babyhood and boyhood but life, and in generous measure he has been the teacher of himself as well as of me; for often when asked by me how he came to know this or that he will answer with some surprise in words that remind one of the childhood of English speech: “Why, I learned it to myself.”

Day by day some new, agreeable surprise from him awaits me. No book on the library shelf out of line with its neighbors and no telephone receiver upside down on its supporting hook escapes his critical eye, since he is a great stickler for order; no new object in the room is passed by unnoticed. When breakfast is brought to me he delights to pour my coffee while we sit face to face, each at the head of the small table; and he has long regarded his good offices as a substitute for the sugar I once declined. So now preliminarily he will often ask me with bewitching smile, “Well, do you want *fweet* coffee this morning?” And he knows in advance that I shall surely get it without offending his odd conceit or my palate. To his little poet’s soul the wet wood in the fire sings to him, the rumbling flame over the dry wood there is his drum; the snow is getting its drink in the melting; the sky with its loud, thundering noises is angry and wicked, and happy and good again with smiling sunshine; the blueberries he hunts for but does not find are hiding from him, and he has not needed Shelley to tell him that it is for the thirsting flowers the Cloud brings fresh showers. Rarely is there a talk between us without some addition to the long roll of these quaint accomplishments. Some of these are flashed out like brilliant minute sparks from the anvil, never to be visible again; some take hold of him and become part of his baby philosophy and course of conduct. He has his own way about it all, however, not being urged to feature one or minimize the other; and as a rule he is a wise judge.

And then his questions—No, I forbear, for the answers which follow on the heels of his interrogation points are altogether too meagre for my vanity. What an unfailing source of interest also it is to hear him give a medley of his many dreams—now through

jungle land and waste places, but oftener through inviting surroundings, at one time with us all, and at another with strangers to him and to all human kind—compounded about equally of fact and fancy, and for the hidden meanings of which neither I nor any Dream Book can ever have a solution. How the pendulum of his alternate work and play—for he is an expert at each—swings to the extremes, only to come to a state of well-earned rest and solemn quiet! But even then at times while wide awake and looking off abstracted into space, he will ask us not to interrupt him for a moment, because “*I am thinking.*” We never fail to humor him in this, for long ago he persuaded us of his inability to collect his big thoughts while we chatter. Sometimes it turns out that he is devising slight additions for one of the machines he is constructing (for as I shall presently tell you, he is a great inventor), to be off in a jiffy at his work; arranging for a new place to conceal himself or some little object at “hide and seek”; or planning the drawing of a new picture toy. But alas for his pride or vanity, at times he is forced, like the rest of us in the world, to realize sadly that reflections produce nothing worth the mentioning; and then he will add—with a candor not always characterizing adults: “Well, I dess I only thought I was thinking.”

Still at times he seems to lack any very lively sense of reciprocity, for I was called to account by him the other day for my silence. Nor was my question ever satisfactorily answered, whether I, too, was not entitled to do some thinking on my own account. For his lament, “But I feel so lonely,” was quite sufficient for the mills of my talk to be set grinding again.

It has been my custom often to ask him, half-seriously, half-playfully, “Well, now, young fellow, why am I proud of you?” and invariably I get the roguish, smiling answer: “Because I am good.” During the past Summer while we were installed in “Magnum Donum,” the home of the “Good Bishop,” who until he died was so much of the life of —, I improvised a sleeping-porch out of an upper balcony. The youngster’s room was just below me. One morning the frolicsome pranks of this very modern, boisterous specimen of

‘ Young barbarians, all at play,’

roused me near dawn and forbade further sleep, and at breakfast I told him all about it. The next morning there was nothing from his room which approached the disturbance of even the patter of a mouse’s feet or the dropping of the negligible pin; and after rehearsing his virtuous conduct, he wished to know whether in consequence I had enjoyed refreshing sleep. In explanation of my “No,” I told him that some altogether wicked flies, which I had failed to take the life of, had pestered me till I elected to exchange the hammock for the bath. He was silent for a while, but it was the thought-

ful silence, for his discerning, reminiscent comment was, "Well, Mum (his name for me), I dess then, ou wer'nt very proud to dose flies."

Yes, "Mum" is his name for me, talking machine that I am—the little satirist; and from the novel coinage of his brain he utters other queer names in abundance. One grandmother, Katharine, is just "Valla"; baby girl cousins are "Tiny Tom" and "Tiny Valla"; one aunt of the same name as Valla is merely "An' Puice," and another aunt "Tiny Valla's Mama"; his other grandmother, Virginia, is "V," while Margaret one of the maids is his "Bogan." So he goes on with his nomenclature.

I will not stop to tell you the numberless manifestations of his tender love for us, since then my story would never end. You would have eloquent, convincing illustration of it all, if permitted to see him sitting now and then with the latest newcomer, "Tiny Valla," in his protecting lap, bending his joyous face over his precious charge, and hear him say as to himself, when he is warned not altogether to smother the young lady with his caresses, "But I love her so, I love her so."

I said he was a philosopher. Will you doubt it when I tell you this? One evening, rather exhausted with an exacting day, I had come home without the high-pitched greeting which is the signal with him for something like *The Children's Hour* of Longfellow; and, believe me, he can be a whole troop of children all by himself. Up to my knee he climbed while I was gazing into the fire, and laying his cheek against mine and putting his arm about my neck, as always when I do not invite his chatter, he sat silent, wistfully content. His "Valla" as well as myself noticed this evening that he seemed especially desirous of ministering to me by an unusually prolonged quiet; and we wondered just where his thoughts were, though to have questioned him would have been altogether too earthy a procedure. It may have been that he was philosophizing over the mystery of moods in his elders; though quite as likely, unselfish soul that he is, he was building some gracious Dream Castle of restorative Peace, where his loved ones might sojourn now and then, as a refuge from the vexatious experiences of life.

By and by, nevertheless, he ventured to call attention to his discovery that one of the hands of the clock was longer than the other; and when I said that the minute hand went the faster, he searchingly asked of his volunteer witness whether it was thus made longer because of the extra work it had to do. The only answer he received was a smile, along with the information that the minute hand was a rapider traveler for me with my gray hair than for himself, since each time it made its hurried circuit he was merely becoming more of a boy, while I was hastening on to be an old fellow. The paradox met with the judicial, though puzzled and slightly sympathetic reflection: "Well, that's funny, Mum." So you must concede me the

right to call him at least my "dreamer-philosopher," or my philosopher-dreamer.

You see, however, I did not sit in judgment on his "parts of speech"; for then much of my appreciation of his quaint wisdom and wonder would have gone for naught. For though his "funny" had little reference to "fun," is he not as accurate as many of his elders? You cannot have much doubt of this, if you recall how a talkative world makes spoiled pets of its "funny" and "jolly" and "awful" and "nice" and "delicious," and a long list of other words, while our noble but slighted vocabulary pleads eloquently though in vain for recognition. Or, to put it differently, we with our language exact unfair, impossible service of so many overworked substitutes, while unfatigued and disciplined hosts of reserves—eager to keep musical step and make great conquests for us in life—are rarely ever called to the colors.

Yet it is possible I can persuade you by an incident that he is not without the qualifications which may make him a discriminating grammarian one of these days. Once upon a time he was told by way of pleasantry that he must not, as was his custom, interlard his conversation with so many "gots" as to be rival of English lady—or English lord, for that matter—of high or low degree. Puffed up with the vanity of a little knowledge, he later called his "Baba" to account for having stated that somewhere, something or other had been gotten. When quite evidently his "Baba" had justified himself, this embryonic academician said: "Yes, I see. If it's a new thing from Schwartz's I've 'got' it, but if it's an old thing of mine (from Schwartz's) I just have it"—a distinction between acquisition and possession which it would be difficult for any budding Lindley Murray to improve upon. And while it is true that the "from Schwartz's" of the illustration was rather over-featured, we have never been quite able to satisfy ourselves whether this was not artful rather than tautological and superfluous. At any rate, his reward at the toy palace was a new whistle—not dear for us at any price—with which, along with the forewarning, up-thrown arm, our inimitable mimic might better play his rôle of big fellow in the Traffic Squad.

However, I must not let this digression interfere with my saying that his young uncle, with no slight gift for pen and pencil sketch, on learning of the clock incident tried his hand at illustrative doggerel verse, with a trifling variation of what happened. But inasmuch as we must be tolerant of the poetic license, doubtless I should not complain of the revised version.

He looked up at the great big clock
That stood against the wall:
"And why is one hand long, Mum,
And the odder one so small?"

"Why, one must travel faster, John,
With a longer way to go,
And the other is a lazy hand,
That's why he moves so slow.

Now, I am on the great big one,
With work and thought and care,
And you are on the smaller one,
With lots of time to spare."

So when I had explained it all
As careful as could be,
He thought awhile and then he laughed—
"Dat's funny, Mum," said he.

I must not forget to tell you this too. His "Baba" unexpectedly summoned to the city left the youngster for a fortnight further at "Magnum Donum." His "Muzzie," who went too, sent him by mail a book of absorbing Indian stories, out of which his "Valla" would read to him just before he went to bed. The book became not so much a possession as an obsession, and at times he merely seemed to tolerate the day for the sake of this longed-for evening hour.

As the time approached for him to go away I would picture to him what my loneliness would be until we met again. At first the young sophist undertook to persuade me that I was wrong about this, but his smiling face showed that he was not sad when it was quite apparent that he had made a mess of his effort; for like the rest of the world he does not turn a forbidding face to appreciation. Yet he was the little child eloquent on the last evening before the day of his leave-taking, when climbing up to the couch where I was resting he took me captive with his speech. I do not recall it all, but there was the promise not to forget me day or night, to remember me in his prayers and to draw one of his favorite sketches and copy in capital letters a love message (at both of which performances he is an adept) and send them to me in what he terms "A Bended Letter"—always a wonderfully fascinating production. And finally, with a touching bit of sentiment and a generous impulse all his own, he added for his peroration: "And 'Mum' I'll leave my Indian book for you."

Even this was not the end, for just then his "Valla" called from an adjoining room that the time for reading had arrived; and though you will be quite prepared to understand he did not rush off from me pell-mell, perhaps it will not occur to you that he declined the invitation as with manly voice (in which, Heaven be praised, there was no trace of the false, sacrificial, better-than-thou note some of us perfervid adults make use of when merely doing a gracious act) he called out, and I repeat to you his own words: "No,

'Valla,' I'm sorry, but I can't come; for I am here talking things over with 'Mum.' "

Do you wonder that I still thrill with emotion as I recall this scene, as I did, when with his hand gripped in mine we went together to the evening reading, or that now and then I tell him he is my little *magnum donum* from the gods?

How often we omit the reason of persuasion and patience for these youngsters! Some time since his nurse, so that he might not be quite out of the fashion, taught him to sing "*It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary*;" and, oddly enough, he carries the tune well, though no one ever thought he had much of an ear for music. He learned it in this wise:

It's a long way to Tipperary;
 It's a long way to go.
 It's a long way to Tipperary;
 It's a long way to go.
 Good-bye, Piccadilly;
 Good-bye Leicester Square.
 It's a long, long way to Tipperary,
 But my heart's right there.

Just as an experiment, rather than because concerned about his being a bit off the road of accuracy, I explained how the lines had been written and ought to be sung. He was easily persuaded that the fourth line should be: "To the sweetest girl I know." For, in his manly way, he has ever the considerate thought for the humans and even the things about him, that appear likely to need his ministering care; and peculiarly within his tender keeping is always the girl, provided she be sufficiently "tiny." And if I were to assume the rôle of a prophet, I should predict that when he grows to maturity he will entertain many an old-fashioned idea of womanhood, rather than some new-fangled, modern-day notions as to feminism.

When, however, I came to suggest the substitution of "Farewell, Leicester Square," for the "Good-bye, Leicester Square," I encountered difficulty. There was no distinct remonstrance, but every time the song was sung, it was only "Good-bye, Leicester Square," though I told him what good company "Farewell" and "Good-bye" would keep with each other. One day when still advising the change, I noticed in quivering lip and tear-filled eye unmistakable signs of an imminent disturbance; and I knew what it was all about when he asked me: "Yes, but what does Farewell mean, Mum?" Thereupon I took down from a library shelf one of the big volumes of the Historical Dictionary and with an approach to seriousness read, after a fashion, all that Farewell originally meant and had come to mean as time went on, and pointed with solemn finger to quotations, wherein some of the illustrious of the world had given

the word a generous welcome. His doubts were all resolved, and no one can now induce this docile boy to sing the song otherwise than as it was written, and as he is convinced it should be sung.

He learned a good deal more, too, than the correct version, for it was further evidence to him that in seeking to understand and guide him aright, the "rule of reason" is as binding upon us as it was upon the great judge in the interpretation of an epoch-making statute. And if, as he now sounds out his "Farewell, Leicester Square," you could witness the grateful, triumphant look on his face, aglow with a smile—which an angel might well envy—you would not need to be told that surely all of his heart is not away off there in Tipperary, but that a goodly part of it is here—safe in my possession.

With what promptness, too, may one get co-operation from these youngsters! This boy not so long ago fretted and at times cried overmuch without apparent cause, though later we came to the conclusion that it was largely due to a former nurse, who though a good soul was as ignorant of the workings of a child's mind as of the Binomial Theorem or Kepler's laws of planetary motion. We therefore did what lay in our power to lead the unhappy little fellow to the right way.

In explaining how in all likelihood there was now a good John Junior and again a bad John Junior, I suggested that when a cry-baby was on the scene what remained of the good John Junior might be very well occupied in going to a nearby window and dropping the wicked one down, down, down—no matter how perilous the height or how disastrous the consequences. The plan almost always worked to his satisfaction; and day by day the bad John Junior went to his destruction, the good John Junior for the time being left in full and peaceful possession of himself.

Yet inasmuch as the wicked side partner had a remarkable capacity for resurrection, I devised another method whereby a smile might exorcise the Evil One more effectively. Then there were even greater and more lasting marvels; for if I was ready to wipe away the tears—and this was always required of me—the sunshine invariably streamed back again for him and me. Thereupon I told him, in his own language, of the converse of the rule of ethics, whereby punishment in the Court of Conscience, unlike that in the courts of law, lessens with each unrebuked offense; and made it quite clear to him how heartened are men for further resistance, by successfully setting their faces against the folly of the world. Do not for a moment think that he did not understand me, for he is now quite convinced that the oftener the smile makes conquest of the tears, the less likely will the impish Master Hyde think it worth while to lay siege to the citadel of young Dr. Jekyll, which gets more and more impregnable to the attacks of his treacherous, persistent enemy.

Even then he was not satisfied with what he had just learned,

but, like a wise boy, continued in still further quest of understanding. For, though realizing the miracle wrought by the smile, he was interested in finding out whether, when the tears were there and the smile nevertheless came, it was the good John Junior or the bad John Junior that really did the smiling. I tried very hard to satisfy his curiosity, but my effort was labored enough, now that I think it all over. Perhaps you, too, may discover that arriving at the correct answer is not wholly free from difficulty; for, after all, which is it in us, man or child, that does the smiling on like occasions, and would it not be a pity if it were always the saintly part of us?

He frets and cries no more now as of old, and he informed me the other day, while singing at his tasks, with no end of improvised themes both musical and verbal, that the bad John Junior had gone for good and all. I answered that I scarcely believed this, and it is quite possible that involuntarily I may in my selfishness have thought I hoped not. For I should not grieve at seeing again this miracle wrought by the smile; and do we not always shudder at the permanently and in consequence the very probably ostentatiously good in this world?

This whole subject interests him mightily, and not long since he was desirous of finding out whether the bad John Junior ever by any chance had a virtuous interval. I told him in language he understands without the interpreter, that I was sure of it, seeing how many are the occasions when the wicked were moved by at least good impulses, which in the Court of Forbearance often constitute relevant, convincing testimony to disprove total depravity. And before long I shall persuade him that not so much by a consideration of a few of our deeds, as by the balance to be struck at last between the good and the bad in us, we or our biographers, if we have any, may know how stands the account of our lives. Have no doubt, however, that in the case of my boy the good will be the minuend and not the subtrahend; and if ever he is inclined to be disconsolate over some inevitable back-sliding, he will be able to realize through such comforting words as these, with how little, after all, of worthy achievement the best of men must be content:

Year after year, he must thumb the hardly varying record of his own weakness and folly. It is a friendly process of detachment. When the time comes that he should go, there need be few illusions left about himself. *Here lies one who meant well, tried a little, failed much*:—surely that may be his epitaph of which he need not be ashamed. Nor will he complain at the summons which calls a defeated soldier from the field: defeated, ay, if he were Paul or Marcus Aurelius!

Yet before leaving this part of my little story I must confess to surprise at the result, though I ought to have been prepared for surprise only if there had been no such result. For here was a human being, on tip-toe for the light, yet blind as to the way; and he was enabled to find it from but a few feeble rays of Fancy. He was, it

is true, a little human being, but all of us are poor enough in vision if some of that light does not shine for us.

Too often we are abashed if a censorious, supercilious, matter-of-fact world finds us off the highway ablaze with garish, artificial lamps. That world would have us concern ourselves with what it conceives is the substance of things—things to be eaten and worn and trafficked in, but which are often but empty shells; it thinks that mortals can live by bread alone. Seeing fads and fancies yoked together it fails to realize that Fancy and the fad have no kinship; and finding Fancy sometimes made to masquerade in the garish colors of buffoon and mountebank, it thinks the lock-up the proper abode for her. As for the Imagination, why, many of us by a large majority vote long since ostracised her from our life. Vital things, too, including reverence for what is worthy as well as regard for what is beautiful, went with them into banishment; and if a new Paul should arise to reason of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, he need expect no trembling from some of us; he might consider himself fortunate if not greeted with a titter.

May our boy, wiser than all this, visit often in days to come, the country where Fancy and the Imagination dwell and rule, and thus have the joy and profit I have tried to portray in these lines I have written for him:

It is a lordly realm where these two hold
 Their sway—no cabin'd room for slipper'd ease
 To doze in idle, pleasurable musings;
 A land roofed in by firmament alone,
 Its walls horizons vast of visions built;
 Where bankruptcy of mind and soul becomes
 A treasury rich in wondrous wisdom;
 And high resolve with covenant new receives,
 From proffer'd chalice of the dead immortal,
 Valorous strength for sturdy thought and deed,
 The zeal for youth that will not dread of age,
 Assurance of the way in paths of gloom
 And life expectant of a joyous dawn;
 Where littleness with all its baneful brood
 Slinks off abash'd, as through the wide-flung gates
 On peaks resplendent stream the floods of light
 For vigil's recompense.

At times he pictures to me what is to happen, when it will be his great good fortune to be the really big fellow; and he longs for the hour to come with magic flight. But I tell him my hope is that his wish, so disquieting to me, will have pinioned wings, for I know with Emerson the "witchcraft of curls and dimples and broken words."

Once I read him as my justification those beautiful Swinburne verses of *Not a Child*; and never did adult seem to understand better the music of the lines. When the other day he laughed long and

merrily as he lay in my arms, I read him another of Swinburne's gems; and this wonder-working poet could have looked down from the spirit-world upon no more eager listener than this blessed boy of mine:

All the bells of heaven may ring,
 All the birds of heaven may sing,
 All the wells on earth may spring,
 All the winds on earth may bring
 All sweet sounds together;
 Sweeter far than all things heard,
 Hand of harper, tone of bird,
 Sound of woods at sundawn stirred,
 Welling water's winsome word,
 Wind in warm wan weather,

One thing yet there is, that none
 Hearing ere its chime be done
 Knows not well the sweetest one
 Heard of man beneath the sun,
 Hoped in heaven hereafter;
 Soft and strong and loud and light,
 Very sound of very light
 Heard from morning's rosiest height,
 When the soul of all delight
 Fills a child's clear laughter.

As his resourcefulness is appealed to, the toys of babyhood are no longer the absorbing things of interest they once were; and just before Christmas he made the novel proposal to me that he would like them to go to some poor but "tiny" children who might treasure them. As for himself, why, big fellow that he is, he constructs out of chairs and tables and sofa, odd blocks and whatnots, with broomsticks for the support of the protecting "woof" from wind and weather—(and every loitering adult in the household within reach is required to be among his apprentices, for he tolerates no drones about him)—"Opotobiles," taxicabs, "twolley" cars, "aewoplanes," victorias, hansoms, and all kinds and conditions of vehicles of transportation. Among them is the Santa Claus sleigh with toys galore for other little ones; and his Christmas comes more than once a year. And if you will but listen to his explanations, they are lighted, heated, and well-fitted out, with all modern appliances and improvements—including bells and horns, to wake pedestrians out of the trances into which they seem often to pass while crossing thoroughfares.

Should you fail to see all this and think you are looking at the things out of which the construction is made and not at the construction as he evolves it, why then you would be a fancyless, hopeless old fellow of the slippered, pantaloon stage, or perhaps worse, the Mr. Dryasdust materialist.

We think of the child as capable of arriving at the meaning only of Nursery Rhymes—and of course they should be of its repertory. And though this youngster knows a goodly number of them, he is familiar with and says over to me again and again many an exquisite line from Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*. While he will tell you with odd comment all about *Jack the Giant Killer*, *Red Riding Hood*, and *The Three Bears*, he is stirred by the melody and fascinated by the story of *The Culprit Fay* and *The Forsaken Merman* as now and then I read some of the lines to him. As time goes on and he has the benefit of other like reading and instruction, not only advantageous of itself, but equally so for its suggestiveness, will he not have an ever-increasing apprehension of the distinction between what is worthy and unworthy in life as well as in letters? Will he not see on a widening horizon finer prospects, and know at a glance the abyss between the magical color and beauty of the intellectual treasures of the world, and some of its dull, cheap, debased accumulations?

To expect, under some conditions, results different from those we often witness in the upbringing of the young in our charge is, if we give heed to the sayings of the wise, not a reasonable guess, and the astute gambler would pronounce it not even a fair bet; and if we would realize how thoroughly the child is the embodiment and manifestation of its environment and experiences, we have but to read Walt Whitman's *There Was a Child Went Forth*.

Then, too, he is beginning to find wisdom elsewhere than in prose or poetry, for he is learning to gaze longingly into that great book which Nature invites us so persuasively to turn the pages of. Never since he came to the years of awakened intelligence have I failed, when with him in the fields, to call by name the bird or wild flower or tree or plant we came across. It is true he remembers but a few of these names, but it is enough that these few have lodgment with him now; for by and by, he will come to know Nature, just as men are made conversant with a foreign language—by living with it and unconsciously becoming part of it. He will come to know, too, among many other things, how it is that the earth renews itself, why flowers have color, how they are propagated, why there are tides in the sea, and the immutable laws which bind countless worlds into one vast and limitless Universe. Then the humility and reverence which will be his possession should leave no place for such a forbidding intruder as vanity or arrogance.

When he is no longer required to be in his bed as the chickens go to roost, you may be sure he will be taken out-of-doors to look at the heavens, and thus not grow up with the shamefully meagre knowledge so many of us have concerning the glories there. He will not merely see some lights above him, for he will have learned how the stars have been grouped in constellations since the dawn of civilization in the world; how they appear in song and legend, why they

are aglow with light and color, and what their part is in the divine order. And though he will doubtless never have much of an acquaintance with Spherical Harmonics, he will know intimately all about the Music of the Spheres.

This boy is not applauded for doing the things which it ought to be natural for him to do; he is scarcely commended for doing them. The approval or disapproval which he sees on the faces of those about him serves often to guide him aright. If this course be not sufficient, he, as a rule, is left to suffer the consequences of his misconduct. Toys which he destroys are not replaced for him; only those which by inevitable accident are put out of commission. He is not coddled, nor is he threatened; but he is told what is to happen to him in small measure now, and in large measure hereafter when he has entered the world of responsibility, if he flouts the counsels of prudence. But admonition is his sole punishment, for to such a sensitive, gentle boy a slap would be a transgression and a rough blow next door to a crime. And while we are now and then sorely pained to see him suffer even slightly (though, perhaps, it is deeply) from the effects of petty wilfulness, we never, on such occasions, seek to buy back his smiles by insincere bargains or offers. We comfort ourselves, however, with the consoling thought, how in that good old Bible word "tribulation," rightly understood, there still persists its original etymological truth—the threshing of the husk from the ear.

His trust in his fellows is unrestrained, for the promises made to him are religiously kept, and no one is permitted ever to tell him what was not, what is not, or what is not to be. Accordingly he has an abiding confidence in the sayings of those about him and never has reason to doubt that what he hears is the truth, the whole truth, or anything but the truth. For he is quick to see that we feel bound to govern ourselves in intercourse with him as he does in his intercourse with us, by the honor of the Code. And when once I read him in *Peter Pan* of the lapse of Mr. Darling into deception, he did not seem to think the transgressor had atoned too much by the kenel-penance.

May no experience in life ever serve to dissuade him from holding fast to such wisdom!

Have no fear that he will ever become the abnormal, prating moralist, for he is, thank Heaven, a well-balanced boy. And would that the thinned ranks of the well-balanced might be recruited by the Gods or the Fates (or whosoever function it is to attend to such matters) by lordly fiat or propagation along lines not even necessarily eugenic—so urgent is the need.

Yes, let me thank Heaven again that he is a well-balanced boy. Thoughtful but equally playful, he can turn a handspring a good deal more engagingly than the stage acrobat. He can be silent, but he can summon about himself, when driving his "Opotobile" or

"twolley" car or "aewoplane" or Santa Claus's sleigh, a great company of hearers and talkers (for he lets them take a reasonable part in the conversation), with whom he interchanges views of a variety which would be the despair of many a clever ventriloquist, and with the eloquence of a great advocate. While at times as sober as a priest and as solemn as an owl in his outlook upon life, at other times he can be as merry a soul as Old King Cole; and when the spirit of mischief possesses him and he is convinced that the occasion has come for its exhibition, you will find him a spectacular and often a noisy showman. You would have no doubt on this subject, if ever you had seen this boy and that former nurse of his when he, elusive little beggar, was scampering off from her through the streets, and she, "large, loyal, and aggressive" as the cook of Bret Harte, was in hot pursuit, which seemed likely at any moment to end with her giving up either the ghost or the chase.

As for his humor, why it is so contagious that he would be shunned as a plague by many a mental or moral dyspeptic (I sometimes fail to understand which it is) who always looks and sometimes talks as if desirous of robbing you of your belongings, and who, if having anything to transmit, would in all likelihood disinherit you here and hereafter as well. Perhaps I should add that any effort to improve upon that humor would be as "wasteful and ridiculous excess" as the attempt to gild refined gold, or to do any of the other foolish acts recounted in the words which Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Salisbury, when King John had insisted upon the superfluous and hazardous fourth crowning.

Yes, thank Heaven for the third time, and for all time that this boy of mine is thus well-balanced.

Then, too, what a comforting reflection it is that when this well-balanced boy grows to maturity, he will not wait to be drafted into service, but will straightway join the ranks of well-balanced men, of whom there is to be such crying need in approaching years! How thrilled is one by thoughts of the momentous mission of these few men—since they will never be of the majority—with their sane, stimulating, reassuring message!

For though, in some respects, there is a justifiable protest against the existing economic order, a reconciliation must be found somewhere between the smug satisfaction of the reactionary and any I. W. W. creed; and the good there is in Socialism is only to be welcomed if divorced from its crudities and abominations. Present moorings are not to be cast off from, until the menace of drifting into perils which invite inevitable shipwreck is provided against, by a clear idea of the directions whither we are to lay our course. Though for the safety of the voyage we are all making, some of the cargo wherewith experienced, right-minded men long ago set sail needs to be jettisoned, the ship must not for this reason be turned

over to the chart and compass and black flag of a piratical crew. If it ever be the ideal function of the State to see to it that in wages or comfort no laborer or his dependents shall fall below a prescribed level, the State must first concern itself a good deal more than it has heretofore done, with the conditions under which immigration is permitted and children are born and reared. The arrogance and whip of Capital and the distrust and evil weapons of Labor must be laid aside, so that their hands may be free to join in the grip of a common interest.

The lesson must be learned, even by grievous experience, that Government cannot cure all the ills which flesh is heir to; and that at times it is good gospel as well as good law to permit accepted rules of conduct as well as of property to go unchanged, though in consequence there be the resulting individual hardship. And if in the past some traditions and precedents have been held in too high regard, the distorted creations of Cubist reformers should not be set up as idols for worship. Admittedly the hard facts of existence must be faced, but there are nevertheless dreams to be dreamed; and though misery tugs at the heartstrings, the door must not be slammed in the face of wise counsels of the head, which warn us against the besetting dangers of injudicious succor. Nor, at times, are the words of Scripture less true to-day than when they were uttered: "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

While arrows are to be aimed at the stars, they can at the same time be shot in directions where they are likely to transfix and bring down something for the urgent needs of earth. As never before must the practical and the ideal find a common meeting-place in the activities of our lives, though to reach the best that Heaven or earth has for our portion, we are not required, as some of us seem to believe, to go high in air or far afield on land. We need merely to catch the inspiration of such an utterance as that of Walt Whitman:

"I am afoot with my vision.

The voice must be lifted discriminately even in prayer; and Wisdom adopted Juvenal as a favorite son, when in that matchless Satire he besought mankind to invoke for itself *mens sana in corpore sano*, and depicted how grim ruin can be visited upon us through the granting of our improvident appeals, by the too indulgent gods.

The seductive promise of the gold brick of a statutory material millennium must not be permitted to corrupt the judgment, while we grow tolerant of the meagre things of the spirit which heretofore have so often been the portion of the world. If some old orthodox religious views no longer serve for guidance, we can find other sustenance than that proffered us by the venturesome, if not presumptu-

ous, founders of new religions, and, like Wordsworth, understand that there still are

Authentic tidings of invisible things
and that faith may

. . . become a passionate intuition.

Nor, as they see often how few are their converts, will these well-balanced men grow disheartened or weary in well-doing; for they will know that one may not plant to-day and reap to-morrow, and that Lowell uttered no greater truth than:

Endurance is the crowning quality,
And patience all the passion of great hearts.

Nor will they—No, I must not thus wander away from my boy, for he ought to be the most of my sermon as he is the whole of my text; or, prosy-preacher-like, I may be talking to my congregation sole in its sleep. Or at least the selfish, depressing thought will come to me that when he is thus found in the ranks of well-balanced men, I, alas, shall be afar off. Therefore for your sake and my sake let me turn back to him as my present treasure.

You need never fear to find in this boy even the vice of selfishness, any more than you need look for ugliness in his expressive face; and as well expect guile or wilful wrongdoing from him as destructive cold from radiant sunshine. Nor will you ever be called upon to hear from him the cheap vulgarity of speech so repugnant to men of sensibilities. He will inevitably now and then tell, as illustrative of the passing incident, the story which is not for drawing-room consumption; but he will never consent to be foul-mouthed as some gentle people apparently take pride in being, while they pour out pointless stories with little but gutter filth for their recommendation. He must go out into the world and in a measure be toughened and perhaps coarsened by contact with it, for much rough wind and weather will be met with there. His walk will not always be such as to ensure him against stumbling; and he will at times, almost as a matter of course, wander off from that path which experience has found to be the best for man to travel over—though his goings are not likely to be so headlong and reckless as to bring him within the danger zone of the deadly precipice. Nevertheless he cannot wholly lose his way, for he will have always the information whereby to find the path again.

You must not misunderstand my view. I am not so foolish as to think he has learned many things, but I am clear he has learned that which will enable him hereafter to recognize some of the standards whereby he is to measure true achievement in life; and this is one of the best things for mortals to learn. And he has had more than a glimpse of another of those best things: that the simplest,

rightly ordered thought and word and deed is not merely something worthy of itself but has a relative value in being a link—not liable ever to be broken or even weakened—in the chain that binds us to what is ennobling and enduring.

No, as I think it all over, I have few if any misgivings that the close companionship with his elders has taken from him aught of the zest of boyhood, whilst it has given him these intimations as to some of the elements—often obscure to the man as to the child—out of which the stuff of character is to be fashioned. And I am sure that, as the years go by, he will be as responsive to the reproachful plaint or the righteous outburst of injustice, and to the mute misery which has no cry, as ever was Knight of Old to the summons of chivalrous impulse; and that by reason of caution and fidelity he will be as much entitled to be considered the good soldier for high endeavor in life, as were the veterans to be chosen against the host of the Midianites, for the twice-sifted army of Gideon.

You saw how he went his way to bed after his prayers—those fervent beseechings for the well-being of all of us, by name or included in the “everybody I know”—though he did not this evening, as he sometimes does, first put the handles of the desk drawers to sleep by turning them up against the supporting wood. You recall how—clinging to that toy baby, sadly battered but dearer to him than all the toys of Toyland, and throwing his many kisses to us with winning gesture and smiling injunction “Now don’t lose ’em”—he climbed step by step to the floor above with his oft-repeated, melodious “Good night, fweet deams, God bless ou,” and last, but not least, his “Amma Gamma”; and though what the meaning of this last is we shall perhaps never fully know, we are quite sure it is a wondrous, all-embracing benediction.

I have tried to make it clear to him how such blessings minister to us in life; and some day, and in the near future too, as I read to him Charles Reade’s inspiriting words in *Christie Johnstone*, he will be told that for me and the others about him his blessing has as magical and quickening a voice as the great tumult of gratitude of the old fisherwoman must have had for the noble benefactor, who had assured her that “want should never enter that door again.”

His Lordship had risen to go. The old wife had seemed absorbed in her own grief; she now dried her tears.

“Bide ye, sirr,” said she, “till I thank ye.”

So she began to thank him, rather coldly and stiffly.

“He says ye are a lord,” said she. “I dinna ken, an’ I dinna care; but ye’re a gentleman, I daur say, and a kind heart ye hae.” Then she began to warm. “And ye’ll never be a grain the poorer for the siller ye hae gien me; for he that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord.” Then she began to glow. “But it’s no your siller, dinna think it; na, lad, na! Oh, fine! I ken there’s mony a supper for the bairns and me in yon bits metal; but I canna feel your siller as I feel your winsome smile, the drop

in your young een, an' the sweet words ye gied me, in the sweet music o' your Soothern tongue. Gude bless ye!" (Where was her ice by this time?) "Gude bless ye! and I bless ye!"

And she did bless him: and what a blessing it was! Not a melodious generality, like a stage parent's, or papa's in a damsel's novel; it was like the son of Barak on Zophim. She blessed him as one who had the power and the right to bless or curse.

She stood on the high ground of her low estate and her afflictions, and demanded of their Creator to bless the fellow-creature that had come to her aid and consolation.

This woman had suffered to the limits of endurance. Yesterday she had said: "Surely the Almighty does na *see* me a' these years!"

So now she blessed him, and her heart's blood seemed to gush into the words. She blessed him by land and water. She knew most mortal griefs; for she had felt them. She warned them away from him one by one. She knew the joys of life; for she had felt their want. She summoned them one by one to his side.

"And a fair wind to your ship," cried she; "an' the storms aye ten miles to leeward o' her." Many happy days, "an' weel spent," she wished him. "His love should love him dearly, or a better take her place. Health to his side by day; sleep to his pillow by night."

A thousand good wishes came, like a torrent of fire, from her lips, with a power that eclipsed his dreams of human eloquence; and then, changing in a moment from the thunder of a Pythoness to the tender music of some poetess mother, she ended—

"An' oh, my bœnny, bœnny lad, may ye be wi' the rich upon the airth a' your days, AND WI' THE PUIR IN THE WOULD TO COME!"

Slight wonder that "His Lordship's tongue refused him the thin phrases of society."

Yes, of such sort is this boy's blessing, and as I have said to him more than once, so long as he continues to be the fine fellow, his prayers for himself and for all of us will avail much, both here and on high.

His part in life is blessing;
Ours, only to be blest.

He is surely far away in dreamland now, and may his sleep and dreams be those of the exquisite lullaby of Caroline McCormick:

Good night, oh little love of mine, good night;
The stars are bright,
But in the skies above thee—who can say?
Haply the slumber stars, more bright than they,
Shall guide thy feet along a flowery way
To morning light.

Dream on, oh little love of mine, dream on;
The day is gone,
But who can tell what sunlit fancies fill
Thy dreamland with delight? So wander still
Across the blessed fields of sleep until
The morrow dawn.

Years after these verses were printed in *Harper's Magazine*, they were engrossed and illustrated marginally by the daughter of one of my clerks, with all the toys ever sold in shop or born in the brain of child. The work of art hangs always in its attractive frame at the foot of his bed to ensure this boy of mine generous sleep and beautiful dreams. Is it not fitting that these should come to him under the spell of such lines?

And now as the time approaches for us old fellows to say Good Night, let this be our parting thought.

Perhaps as we thus sit here communing with each other over companionable pipe and genial fire, he—God bless him now and always—is with his “ opotobiles ” and “ aewoplanes ” and “ twolley ” cars and Santa Claus's sleighs or his toys of others' making; or is marching along at the head of his well-drilled company, with one of the household as drummer, another as “ horner,” another as “ flagger,” and still another as “ horser ” (for the cavalry mount is easily enough improvised with one of the supporting broomsticks of the “ opotobile woof ”)—all keeping step to “ It's a long, long way to Tipperary,” with a devotion as loyal as ever led men forth to generous deed and noble sacrifice. Or it may be that the little fellow, at rest from his day's labors, is engrossed in solving for to-morrow some of the knotty problems which defied solution to-day, or is holding his “ Tiny Valla ” in caressing arms and gentle embrace. Nor must you consider me quite foolish if at times I seem to see him in his sleep looking upon the angel face of that other boy of mine, the “ young-eyed cherubin ”; nor quite selfish if I think it just possible that amid an attendant train of admiring ones, he catches a glimpse now and then of his grey-haired biographer and lover:

“ MUM.”